



MEDIA ADVISORY

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR REHABILITATION SERVICES NAMED

POSITION FILLED BY WOMAN WITH UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE ON INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

NASHVILLE, Tenn.— Andrea Cooper, a middle Tennessee resident, was recently named Assistant Commissioner for Rehabilitation Services within the Tennessee Department of Human Services. Cooper is also the chairperson of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities. DHS Commissioner Virginia Lodge is confident Cooper is the right person to lead the division that is dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities become successfully employed in communities across Tennessee and beyond.

"We were very fortunate to have had so many excellent candidates for this position," said Lodge. "The Rehabilitation division already has wonderful leadership throughout its various programs. With Andrea's unique perspective and management skills, I'm confident we'll be able to build upon this already excellent program."

Andrea has had quadriplegia since 1997 due to a spinal cord injury. She returned to the workforce through the assistance of vocational rehabilitation in 2004. Prior to the onset of her disability, Andrea obtained a B.A. in English from Indiana University and a law degree from Vanderbilt University.

"I am eager to lead the division in its provision of efficient and effective services for our rehabilitation clients," said Asst. Commissioner Cooper. "A large part of our effectiveness hinges on our ability to equip clients with the skills that will enable them to handle the responsibility that goes with their right to self-direction."

The most important part of managing a disability, Asst. Commissioner Cooper believes, is to be able to maintain one's place at home, in the family, and in society. For Cooper, this means obtaining assistance with personal care, domestic chores, transportation and other daily tasks that persons without disabilities take for granted. Returning to full-time employment was Cooper's final step in complete rehabilitation. Based on this experience, she is committed to individualized support services and equal opportunity in the workplace for persons with disabilities.

Cooper leaves behind a position as in house legal counsel for Permobil, Inc., a powered wheelchair manufacturer, where she started the Wilson County-based company's law department in January 2004. Prior to joining Permobil, Inc., Cooper was in house counsel for insurance giant American General. She also has been a staff attorney for the Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration.

For more information about the Department of Human Services and the Division of Rehabilitation Services, please visit: www.state.tn.us/humanserv/rehabilitation

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